

Public Questions Full Council 250409

#	From / Date	To	Question	Sent to	Proposed Response	Director Sign Off	Exec Director sign-off
1	Christine Turner 27 th Jan 19:37	Cllr Elaine Taylor – Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Decent Homes	<p>There are exceptions to Permitted Development legislation that allow elected and unelected officials to support residents with negotiating telecom infrastructure, such as, planning dropped kerbs, building driveways, and householders' deeds, which restrict overhead infrastructure. Are officials aware they can support their constituents in these circumstances?</p> <p>IXW's poor practices have recently endangered ENW engineers and the public by installing poles too close to electricity lines. Is Oldham Council willing to risk constituents' safety by allowing this company's reckless behaviour?</p> <p>Can cabinet members confirm any changes to the Government's guidance for telecoms companies on best practices for installing new equipment?</p>	@Peter Richards	<p>Thank you for your question Ms Turner. The council are aware of concerns raised about IX Wireless' infrastructure and how their contractors are installing it.</p> <p>However, unfortunately, there are no exceptions to permitted development legislation that allow the council as local planning authority to intervene, as you suggest.</p> <p>In relation to highways permits, council officers have liaised with IX Wireless recently on the installation of their infrastructure by contractors and, for a time, withdrew all permits to IX Wireless whilst they provided comfort to us that they and their contractors would improve their procedures for installations. They have now done so, and we are granting highways permits, where appropriate, to IX Wireless again.</p> <p>In terms of guidance from the Government for telecoms companies on best practice for such installation</p>		

					of new equipment, ultimately we as a local planning and highways authority are governed by legislation and regulations, and none of the relevant planning and highways related legislation and regulations for communications infrastructure have recently changed.		
2	Mark Rowe 27 th Jan 23:40	Cllr Elaine Taylor – Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Decent Homes	During the recent council meeting Councillor Shuttleworth raised an important point on housing development. The council lead did not have the information to hand but promised to supply councillors Shuttleworth with the information. How will the answer to that question be conveyed to the residents and voters of Oldham?	@Peter Richards	<p>Thank you for your question Mr Rowe. The council recently published its Annual Monitoring Report, which includes data on planning applications and housing permissions, such as that asked about by Cllr Shuttleworth.</p> <p>Ordinarily questions we receive advance notice of are published on the Council's website after the Council meeting, however in this case there was an honest mistake made in the proceedings and even though Cllr Shuttleworth had given notice of his question. In relation to Cllr Shuttleworth's specific questions, he asked:</p> <p>1. Within the last five years, how many housebuilding applications have been granted?</p>		

					<p>Over the past five years (2019-2024), a total of 420 applications (for 3,854 homes) have been granted.</p> <p>2. In which districts have such applications been submitted and for how many properties? Applications have been approved in all districts (the most in North – 1,251 homes, and the least in West – 410 homes).</p> <p>3. How many approved developments have yet to see a spade in the ground? 73% of the homes granted permission have either been completed or are under construction, leaving only 27% of the homes granted permission on sites where we are yet to see “a spade in the ground”.</p>		
3	Nicola Brown Tue	Cllr Jabbar, Deputy	In February 2024 Councillor Sykes wrote to the CEO and Leader asking as only 13 councillors had valid DBS	@Steve Hughes @Wendy Jackson	Thank you for a really important question.		

	04/02/2025 16:52	Leader & Cabinet Member for VfM & Sustainability	checks what actions they would take to ensure due diligence was carried out and by when it would be expected for all to have one. Twelve months on can the Leader confirm the number of Councillors who have valid DBS checks? If below 60, are steps being taken to address this, and when can we expect all 60 Councillors to have one? Should any Councillor fail the DBS check, will this information be shared and will they be removed from office ?	@Alex Bougatef	<p>Council can't force members to complete a DBS check but we do encourage them to do so, it also means Council can't remove a member from Office should they 'fail' a DBS check.</p> <p>What's clear is that there have been some issues recently regarding member DBS checks and as a result Officers are currently working on a new member DBS Policy that will require all members to have a DBS check and all Cabinet and Committee members to have an enhanced DBS. This report will be finalised within the next few months and brought to cabinet seeking approval later in the year.</p> <p>The new policy will mean that we are going above the recommendations of the Independent Review carried out by Simon Bailey to ensure we operate to the highest standards and the public can have confidence in political representatives.</p> <p>We will engage the group leaders for their support and take the policy to Standards Committee to make a recommendation to Council. We will</p>		
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					look at the practical ways that we can support Councillors to apply for a DBS check to make the process as smooth as possible.		
4	Shadab Qumer Tue 04/02/2025 17:10	Councillor Shah, Leader & Cabinet Member for Building a Better Oldham	I've seen publicity about Tommyfield Market traders moving soon to their new home in the Spindles. Could the Leader of the Council clarify when this is taking place and what range of market stalls will be trading from the new venue?	@Maria Cotton @David Hughes @Emma Barton	<p>Thanks for the question Shadab. We are currently planning the move with market stallholders and a final moving date will be decided and confirmed once the specific fitouts of the individual stalls are all confirmed and agreed.</p> <p>We expect the actual move to be in the summer and we will announce a formal opening date once this is jointly agreed with the stallholders.</p> <p>I'm really pleased that to reconfirm as we did when we announced the Community Regeneration Fund, we'll be covering some of the moving costs and new equipment for traders, and the market will include over 50 businesses from the current Tommyfield Market, with others moving into larger units in Spindles and other areas of the Town Centre.</p> <p>Our market traders are a really important part of our town centre and I'm pleased, on a personal level, about how we've managed to work closely with them over the last two years. I can't wait until the new market opens this summer and for our residents to get in there and support them to thrive as we begin this new chapter.</p>		

5	Hannah Roberts Tue 04/02/2025 17:23	Cllr Dean, Cabinet Member for Thriving Communi ties and Culture	The Millgate Theatre in Delph is a community theatre offering live theatre, music and film run by and for local people based in a historic building in a Conservation Area. The Saddleworth Players will be 100 years old in 2027. What support can the Council give towards the Building for the Future fundraising campaign to preserve and extend the work at the Millgate including developing the Saddleworth Players youth group?	@Maria Cotton @Emma Barton	<p>Thank you for your question Hannah.</p> <p>The Council are currently in the process of transferring the freehold of the property to the Arts Centre to allow them to apply for external funding to complete the structural works to the building and preserve it for future generations.</p>		
6	Kathryn Phillips Tue 04/02/2025 18:25	Cllr Shah, Leader & Cabinet Member for Building a Better Oldham	<p>I am really dismayed that WH Smith has put up all of their high street shops for sale, including the one in the Spindles. This was announced just after it became public the Post Office is also under threat. What can the Council do to makes sure there is an easily accessible Town Centre Post Office? Is it possible for a Crown Post Office to be reopened?</p>	@Maria Cotton @Emma Barton	<p>Thank you for your question Kathryn.</p> <p>I was really disappointed to see that WH Smith had decided to close their Oldham shop, its unfortunate that another big high street brand has taken the decision to step away from town centres. But we've already had inquiries about the future use of the space and I'm hopeful that we'll attract a retailer that Oldhamers want to shop at and conversations are ongoing.</p> <p>Turning to the matter of the town centre post office, the Post Office have been working towards appointing a new Post Master for the town centre since WHSmith announced their decision to close their store in Spindles. They are following their usual application process for the new opportunity, which we have</p>		

					<p>been told by those who know slightly more about this that it can be a lengthy process.</p> <p>Applicants are required to submit a business plan which includes details of the premises in which they operate or plan to operate. So, because the council is keen to retain the Post Office within the town centre we have worked via our appointed letting agents to help this process as much as we can.</p> <p>We have received a number of enquiries from interested parties about details of available units in Spindles for a new post office, and our letting agents have agreed costs and lease terms with a number of potential franchisees.</p> <p>It is now up to the Post Office to select their preferred Post Master. This is a confidential process with the Post Office and unfortunately, we can't provide an update until the Post Office confirms they have appointed a new operator.</p>		
7	Lewis Farnworth Fri 7/3/24 20:24	Cllr Brownridge, Cabinet Member for Adults, Health & Wellbeing	My question is about pip payments due to the cuts on PIP that those unable to work are you going to carry on taking pip contribution to care despite the National Labour party reducing PIP payments which will leave the most vulnerable in poverty	@Jayne Ratcliffe @Claire Hooley @Hayley Eccles	<p>Thank you to Mr Farnworth for his question.</p> <p>People in receipt of adult social care services are required to be means tested to determine eligibility for financial assistance with care costs. Through the financial assessment process people are asked about</p>		

					<p>their earnings, including pensions and benefits they are in receipt of to calculate their individual financial situation.</p> <p>As a result of the recent announcements and changes to Personal Independence Payments it is likely that people in receipt of this benefit will need to be reassessed, as a result of their income changing. As per the legislation we're operating within we have a duty to continue to financially assess people and the income they are in receipt of, which is a consistent and fair approach.</p> <p>Essentially, we need to remember, that this is a change that is being processed through a Green Paper, and as such opportunities for consultation will take place.</p>		
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After all other	Mark Rowe 27 th Jan 23:59	Cllr Shah - Leader & Cabinet Member for Building a	During council debates the use of Jargon particularly by portfolio leads in my experience is prolific. Whilst councillor may well understand the jargon used the general public including me do not. Can the council explore ways of limiting the jargon used. There are a number of cost	@Steve Hughes @Smyth Harper	<p>Thank you Mr Rowe for your question and it raises an important point. Elected members are public representatives, and council officers are public servants. For both the key word there is "public", and we should all remember that the public should always come first. We should therefore always try to speak in plain English. We should always</p>		

qu est ion s as 2nd qu est ion .		Better Oldham	effective solutions to this issue. For example a crib sheet for attendees, or a jargon notes list on the You Tube channel		avoid jargon. Sometimes we may need to use technical language but when we do, we should always explain it. The Local Government Association has a glossary which sets out some of the commonly-used, but often not understood, terms in local government and I would recommend it to members of the public. It is available at lga.gov.uk/glossary . But, more importantly, I'll take this opportunity to remind my Cabinet colleagues and the officers present that we should always strive to speak in a way that the public understands.		

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Colour Code Chart	
Cllr Arooj Shah – Leader & Cabinet Member for Building a Better Oldham	#FFC9C9
Councillor Taylor – Cabinet Member for Decent Homes	#FBE4D5
Cllr Abdul Jabbar – Cabinet Member for Value for Money & Sustainability	#DAD8F0
Cllr Shaid Mushtaq – Cabinet Member for Children & Young People	#FFF2CC
Cllr Mohon Ali – Cabinet Member for Education & Skills	#CEFEFD
Cllr Barbara Brownridge – Cabinet Member for Adults, Health & Wellbeing	#DEEAF6
Cllr Chris Goodwin – Cabinet Member for Don't Trash Oldham	#E2EFD9
Cllr Fida Hussain – Cabinet Member for Enterprise	#FECFEEB

Cllr Peter Dean – Cabinet Member for Thriving Communities & Culture	#D6BAF4
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